

## Word Usage Variations in Arabic Newspapers: A Corpus Investigation

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### ABSTRACT

The Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is practiced in all Arab countries especially in official communication; written and spoken to unite Arab countries in certain aspects. However, a standardization of the Arabic language, particularly in the word usage is needed between Arabic countries. Seven Arabic newspapers from different countries which contain a corpus of around 87,000 words from *World Affairs* section are used to highlight the differences of word usage. This research is based on a theory (Kilgarriff, 2001) which states that the analysis of the consistency of word usage in corpora or sub-corpora can reveal the lexical choices. This study focuses on the discussion of several types of variations of nouns and verbs usage. The software Wordsmith 5.0 was utilized to analyze the corpus by extracting all words into frequency list and concordance. The results show that the Arabic newspapers had a great contribution in creating word usage variations, specifically in terms of spelling, loan word acceptance, verbs transitivity to particle, phrase combinations and plural formations. In some cases, the influence of foreign language such as English plays an important role in creating variation of Arabic language usage. The results of this study is hoped to increase the awareness of newspaper readers around the world regarding the significant variations in Arabic language usage and its transformations over the years.

**Keywords:** MSA; word frequency; Arabic newspaper; usage differences; stylistic

### INTRODUCTION

Arabic language newspapers have made a great contribution to the development of readers' knowledge and their thinking level (Munir, 2010; Lughud, 1962). These newspapers play an important role in shaping public opinion and describing current world. Events in the field of language learning, academicians consider newspapers as a very helpful media in developing language proficiency among learners (Shamim, 2011). This is because newspapers show the characteristics of widely accepted standard language style and display information of the current language usage as well as language change (Gehrmann, 2007). One of the important aspects in language characteristics in the newspaper is the word usage that might affect readers' understanding towards their reading.

Arabic newspapers use Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in their writing (Saliba, 1988). MSA is regarded as the standard form of the Arabic language in the Arab world. The idea of MSA emerged as a result of the rapid evolution of global communication especially in Arab countries when these countries started to send their satellite for communication purposes around 90 years ago (Gher & Amin, 1999). This is also in line with the view of Clive Holes (2004), who noted that MSA is the language of official communication among the Arabs. In other words, the practice of using MSA as an official language is intended to achieve the goal of having one standard language in the Arab world. This effort is believed by some as an effective effort to strengthen and unite the Arab countries despite their geographical differences.

Although the great effort of unifying Arabic language through MSA, variations and differences in the language usage still occur in the Arabic newspapers that use MSA

(Abdelali, 2004). This shows that the goal of using MSA in the process of standardizing Arabic language is not fully achieved. Zeinab Ibrahim (2010) in her study found that the Arabic language used in Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* was definitely different from what is used in Lebanon newspapers. Variations in terms of Arabic language usage also occur in newspapers that are published in non-Arab countries due to the influence of the local language in that particular country. For example, the word الترنسفير (*transfer*) is an Arabization of an English 'transfer' that is used in *Al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper from United Kingdom. Arabic newspapers are read by people around the world for example Iraqis who migrated to Australia after their country had been attacked by the USA in 2003 (Khoshnow, 2008). As a consequence, several Arabic newspapers which are published in these non-Arab countries (United Kingdom and Australia), are influenced by the local language especially the English language.

This current paper aims to answer the question of what are the variations and differences in language usage that exist between newspapers from different geographical area in the Arab world in addition to newspapers from non-Arab countries. To answer this question, a number of articles from seven Arabic newspapers including two newspapers from non-Arab countries (*Al-Quds al-Arabi* from United Kingdom and *Al-Furat* from Australia) were compiled in a corpus and analyzed to highlight the occurrence of these variations. According to Espada- Gustilo (2011), a corpus-based analysis can be carried out to describe the different usage of linguistic features. Therefore, this study is significant to newspaper readers and students of Arabic media and communication around the world who might encounter these linguistic features. The findings of this study will aid the understanding of newspaper readers around the world about the correct usage of these variations. Ahmed Abdelali (2004) conducted an almost similar study which explored the variations in MSA language usage between 11 Arabic newspapers. However, his study focused on newspapers from the Arab countries only in contrast to the current study, which included Arabic newspapers from non Arab countries.

## THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To explore the language variations trend in terms of word usage that occurs in Arabic newspapers.
2. To provide an in-depth description of the language variation usage of these selected Arabic newspapers.
3. To relate the word usage variations in Arabic newspapers to the country where they are published.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) has been discussed by Arabic language scholars and grammarians for more 90 years (Mol, 2003) when they realized the urgency of uniting Arab nations that were separated by international border (countries). They found out that slight differences do occur in Arabic language usage in the advent of communication technology. Among them is Stetkevych (1970), who noted that MSA has deviated strongly from the Classical Arabic. To realize the aim, uniting and standardizing the usage of Arabic in all Arabic-speaking countries is one of the important steps that should be in place. Therefore, all Arab countries have agreed to recognize MSA as their official language to unify the Arab countries (Al-Sayigh, 1990) since the rapid growth of communication technology in the Arab world in the beginning of the 20th century.

As a result, MSA today has become a formal language that is widely used in both written and most of the spoken mediums throughout 21 Arab countries (Abdelali, 2004). Boudelaa and Wilson (2010) noted that MSA is the language used in written and formal oral communication, such as broadcast news, courtroom language and university lectures and generally the language of the mass media. Since the main role of MSA is unification of the Arab world, it should not, in theory, have a local character which refers to a particular country or one part of the Arab world. In other words, it does not belong to a particular area or group but to the Arab world as a whole (Joseph, 1987).

However, in practice variations do occur in the Arab medias that claim to use MSA. These variations are attributed to two factors that are linguistic factor and non-linguistic factor. In the former, Parkinson (2008) found out the differences that occur between newspapers from different countries are in terms of sentence subject agreement where journalists began to ignore some part of the grammatical aspects. Zawaydeh and Saadi (2006) declared that Arabic orthography aspect is one of the Arabic features that caused the variations. Meanwhile, Wolfram (2005) mentioned that the grammar of the language remains one of the most potential aspects for variation to occur.

The second factor can be related to the geographical factor. Thus, Ditters (1991) believes that the variation in the use of MSA depends on factors such as the progress in time and the geographical spreading by way of interferences with colloquial varieties. In another aspect, the language variation could occur due to the effect of colonization because every part of the Arab world has experienced with different colonial countries mostly from Britain, France and Italy (Mol, 2003). It is also a major factor of loan-word recognition from foreign language into Arabic that led to its use in Arabic newspapers. (Abdelali, 2004).

Abdelali (2004) identified some differences in word usage in newspapers have been identified. For example, he mentioned that the word 'training' was used in Arabic as التريـب (*training*), in *Al-Khabar* newspaper from Algeria, but *Al-Jazirah*, a newspaper from Saudi Arabia uses the word التـريـب (*training*). This happens due to several words that may be rare or nonexistent in some parts of the Arab world but are frequent in others (Abdelali, 2004). This fact has also been scientifically proven by Zeinab Ibrahim (2009) who found that Egyptian newspaper readers cannot understand several words from Lebanese and Moroccan newspapers because geographically, Lebanon represents the Eastern linguistic area; and Morocco represents the North African. For example the word تشطـح (*dance*) which is used in Morocco is not understood by the Egyptian because Egyptians use the word ترقص (*dance*). As can be seen, the Arabic script differs. This coincides with the linguistic area of Egypt where it represents the mid areas of the Arab countries.

Therefore, variations in Arabic language usage can be traced by analyzing a variety of news articles from different Arab regions. That is because the different Arab countries may use different language styles to describe news in similar contexts. An almost similar analysis had been conducted by Abdelali et al. (2005), who collected almost 83,670 newspaper articles from 11 Arab countries in order to analyze the language usage variation. The work compared language usage between Arabic newspapers from different Arab countries. The work, however, did not include any newspaper from non-Arab countries.

## SOURCES OF DATA

The usage of newspaper articles in this study is deemed appropriate to explore language characteristics because they provide a platform to share ideas, suggestions and opinions that have been delivered through various types of newspaper articles starting from current issues section to politics, sports, entertainment, literature, and others (Hishamudin & Norsimah, 2011). The data were gathered from *World Affairs* section in seven Arabic newspapers

including two published in non-Arab countries. The selection of both newspapers from the United Kingdom and Australia is due to their consistency in newspaper publication. The *World Affairs* section is a popular and regular section in the newspapers (Wanta & Hu, 1993). The importance of the *World Affairs* section can be justified by the fact that almost every main newspaper in every country has a specific section for world news. In terms of language usage, the *World Affairs* section reports about events around the world and there is a high possibility that all Arabic newspapers report the same events in the same context. The reporting of the same context in different language usage is an important finding that reflects the occurrence of variation of language usage.

In total, seven newspapers were selected for this study and they were, *Al-Ahram* (Egypt), *Al-Jazirah* (Saudi Arabia), *Al-Safir* (Lebanon), *Al-Sabah al-Jadid* (Iraq), *Al-Khabar* (Algeria), *Al-Quds al-Arabi* (United Kingdom) and *Al-Furat* (Australia). In addition, *Al-Furat* is published by Iraqis who migrated to Australia and therefore, it can be studied together with its counterpart from Iraq (*Al-Sabah al-Jadid*).

The selection of these was based on their daily circulation and availability in digital version. For example, *Al-Ahram* newspaper has the highest circulation in Egypt and the Arab world with 900,000 copies sold daily. It is also labeled as the 64<sup>th</sup> largest newspaper in the world (The World Association of Newspapers, 2005). Meanwhile, the selection of text for analysis was based on the length of the articles in the *World Affairs* section, specifically the number of words. To reach a balance number of words for each newspaper, a *mean* calculation was applied to determine the length of the chosen article. It is done by dividing the whole number of words from all articles in *World Affairs* for thirty days in these newspapers with the number of articles amounting to 2,989. The calculation is as follows:

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\text{Number of words}}{\text{Number of articles}} \quad \text{Mean} = \frac{1,275,880}{2989} \quad \text{Mean} = 426.8585$$

Based on this calculation, articles that contain 427 words should be selected. It is almost impossible to find one daily article which contains exactly that number of words in all the newspapers. Therefore, the range was set at between 250 and 600 words in order to make more articles available for selection. The data included 211 news texts of around 87,000 words from these seven newspapers and were gathered within 30 days simultaneously for the seven newspapers. This was done to ensure data was collected within one month on the *World Affairs* section.

TABLE 1. Number of Words by Newspaper

No	Newspaper	Origin	Number of Words
1	<i>Al-Ahram</i>	Egypt	12,425
2	<i>Al-Jazirah</i>	Saudi Arabia	12,554
3	<i>Al-Khabar</i>	Algeria	12,787
4	<i>Al-Safir</i>	Lebanon	12,440
5	<i>Al-Sabah al-Jadid</i>	Iraq	12,465
6	<i>Al-Quds al-Arabi</i>	United Kingdom	11,848
7	<i>Al-Furat</i>	Australia	12,950
<b>Total</b>			<b>87,469</b>

The calculation on how the number of article was determined is as follows:

$$1 \text{ article} \times 30 \text{ days} \times 7 \text{ newspapers} = 210 \text{ articles}$$

The calculation shows that 210 articles should be analyzed. However, the writer found that one newspaper namely *Al-Ahram* in one of its publications did not fulfill the targeted length of article (between 250 to 600 words). As a solution, 2 articles were selected on that particular day to make up a total number of 211 articles.

## METHODOLOGY

The data was analyzed using Wordsmith 5.0 software which was specifically built to statistically analyze language style in the corpus. It is programmed to produce frequency lists, run concordance searches, find keywords in a text and examine their distribution. In addition, the software also enables the comparison between language usages in texts. This is in line with Abdelali et al. (2005) who stated that many Arabic linguists built their own corpora in order to study any language fields including language variation by using computer analysis tools.

According to Adam Kilgarriff (2001) describing differences in language usage can be performed by comparing between corpora or sub-corpora. In respond to the theory, data from seven Arabic newspapers was collected, including two from non-Arab countries. They contain around 87,000 words from 211 articles in the *World Affairs* section in those newspapers. The articles were collected online and were stored in Microsoft Word format in order to enable editing and indexing. All articles were stored in two different files; a general file that contains all articles and a separate file that contains articles according to newspapers (sub-corpus).

Before analyzing, the data have to be indexed (grammatically tagged) in order to make sure that the software produced accurate results. For this purpose, the writer tagged words that could possibly cause ambiguity such as words with similar spelling but have different annotations. For example, the word ت-ع-ل-م (*ta-'al-la-ma*) might be one of several forms of a verb تَعْلَمُ (*know*), تَعْلَمُ (*learn*), تُعَلِّمُ (*teach*) or a noun تَعْلَمُ (*learning*) because physically they appear similar. In addition, Arabic words that are stringed together in one character should be separated, because the selected software is only capable recognizing words by detecting the character between two spaces. For example, the word لِيضْرِبَهُ (*to-beat-him*) contains three words in one character. So, they should be separated by putting spaces between them to represent the three characters ل - يضرب - هـ (*to-beat-him*).

In analyzing the collected corpus, the study was divided into two sections, first, the whole corpus that contains all articles from all selected newspapers and second, according to sub corpus that represents articles from each newspaper. The purpose of the first analysis is to describe the general trend of language usage variation in Arabic newspapers. The purpose of the second analysis is to relate language variation to the country of publication because each newspaper was published in different countries.

Two categories of word were studied namely, nouns and verbs. Only words that showed sign of variations in both categories of words were studied. The findings showed that in terms of noun, the broken and sound plurals, phrases, loan words and word spelling are the potential aspects which caused language variation. The broken and sound plurals do not have exact similarities to English plurals. But, the broken plural in Arabic language can be partly described as irregular plural in English language. For example, the plural word 'mouse' is 'mice' and this plural can be described as broken plural. Meanwhile regular plural in English such as the word 'school-schools' can be called as sound plural in Arabic. The verb category was focused on verb and subject agreement in gender, verb with semantic family and transitive verb to particle such as the verb يُوْدِي (*lead*) that transitive to particle إِلَى (*to*).

The study of broken and sound plurals should reveal the newspapers' preference of when both forms are available for a particular singular noun. In terms of phrases, the findings

illustrated that there are many different phrases used to indicate similar things. Loan word is among the main factors of variation in language usage because every country may adopt foreign words in different ways and at various acceptance levels. The usage of loan words, in other aspect may cause spelling variation because some sounds of the word are not available in Arabic.

In terms of verb, the analysis on verb and subject agreement in gender reveals deviation of MSA usage from the classical Arabic grammar. The study of verb with semantic family highlights the possibility that different verbs in one semantic family are used in similar context, while transitivity explains whether or not certain verb needs to be combined with a particle.

## RESULTS

The results were divided into two sections: first, word usage variations for the whole data without segregating the newspapers and second, word usage variations between newspapers as mentioned in the methodology. The first section contains the corpus of seven Arabic newspapers in general whereas the second section contains seven sub-corpus represented by each newspaper in order to enable comparison among them.

### WORD USAGE VARIATION FOR THE WHOLE DATA

The results are divided into two categories in Arabic language, which are nouns and verbs.

#### NOUN

##### BROKEN AND SOUND PLURAL

The analysis of nouns begins with the analysis of plural nouns to determine either broken or sound plurals are used more frequently in the *World Affairs* section. The list contains 210 broken nouns and 241 sound plurals. More sound plurals are found than broken plurals in terms of the number of words. On the other hand, their *means* show the opposite. The broken and sound plurals are the special characteristics in Arabic language which is not available in English. The broken plural can be defined as a form of plural built by breaking the original structure of its singular. Meanwhile, the sound plural is another kind of plural which is built by adding و and ن for masculine and ا and ت for feminine to its singular form without breaking the structure. This is similar to addition of the consonant 's' for plural in English.

TABLE 2. Mean of Broken and Sound Plurals

	Broken	Sound
N	210	241
Freq	2477	2684
Mean	11.795	11.140

Table 2 shows that the *mean* for broken plurals (11.795) is more than sound plurals (11.140). However, there are greater number of sound plurals (241) compared to broken plurals (210).

The study looked at plural form used when both sound plural and broken plural were available in Arabic language. Plural nouns that are available only in one plural form (either broken or sound plurals) are not analyzed in this investigation because they do not create variation.

TABLE 3. The Use of Broken and Sound Plurals in World Affairs Section

No	Singular	Broken Plural	Freq	Sound Plural	Freq
1	تقرير (report)	تقارير (reports)	10	تقاريرات (reports)	0
2	نشاط (activity)	أنشطة (activities)	8	نشاطات (activities)	10
3	مشكلة (problem)	مشاكل (problems)	8	مشكلات (problems)	5
4	مشروع (project)	مشاريع (projects)	8	مشروعات (projects)	8
5	رسالة (letter)	رسائل (letters)	5	رسالات (letters)	0
6	تدبير (management)	تدابير (managements)	9	تدبيرات (managements)	0
7	طريق (way)	طرق (ways)	8	طريقات (ways)	0
8	نشط (active)	نشطاء (are active)	5	نشطون (are active)	0

Table 3 shows a tendency in Arabic newspapers to use the broken plural noun more than the sound plural. In the following examples, the opposite is true in the case of only two words: *نشاطات* (activities) which occurred more frequently than the broken plural form, and *مشروعات* (projects), where the sound and broken plurals occurred with equal frequency. Furthermore, the broken plurals of five nouns *تقارير* (reports), *رسائل* (letters), *تدابير* (managements), *طرق* (ways) and *نشطاء* (are active) were used to the exclusion of their sound plurals.

### PHRASES

The occurrence of phrases that contains proper names and without proper names is analyzed and its results is illustrated in Table 4.

TABLE 4. Example of Phrases in World Affairs

Noun	No	Phrase	Freq	Total
الشرق (East)	1	الشرق الأوسط (Middle East)	31	33
	2	الشرق الأوسط الجديد (New Middle East)	1	
	3	الشرق الأوسط العربي (Arab Middle East)	1	
الأطلسي (Atlantic)	1	الحلف الأطلسي (Atlantic Treaty)	10	21
	2	حلف شمال الأطلسي (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)	9	
	3	حلف شمال الأطلسي (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)	2	
الجامعة (league)	1	الجامعة العربية (Arab League)	7	11
	2	جامعة الدول العربية (League of Arab States)	4	
المحتلة (occupied)	1	القدس المحتلة (occupied Jerusalem)	4	5
	2	الأرض المحتلة (occupied land)	1	
إسرائيل (Israel)	1	دولة إسرائيل (state of Israel)	2	3
	2	حكومة إسرائيل (Israeli government)	1	

Table 4 illustrates five nouns that are used in phrases. Each of them is used in various phrases to indicate similar meaning. The use of the word *الشرق* (East) in *الشرق الأوسط* (Middle East) for 33 times shows that the newspapers frequently refer to the Middle East, but the new expressions *الشرق الأوسط الجديد* (New Middle East) and *الشرق الأوسط العربي* (Arab Middle East) shows its variation. For the word *الأطلسي* (Atlantis), the findings show that the newspapers regularly used both *الحلف الأطلسي* (Atlantic Treaty) and *حلف شمال الأطلسي* (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) to refer to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (ten and nine occurrences respectively). With respect to the word *الجامعة*, the table shows that the newspapers promoted the use of both phrases, *الجامعة العربية* (Arab League) and *جامعة الدول العربية* (League of Arab States), to refer to the Arab League (seven and four occurrences respectively). With regard to the word *المحتلة* (occupied), the findings show that it is used with *القدس* (Jerusalem) and *الأرض* (land). The use of phrases such as *دولة إسرائيل* (State of Israel) and *حكومة إسرائيل* (Israeli Government) with 2 and 1 frequency respectively show the indirect recognition of the state of Israel in the Arab world.

## VERBS

### VERB AND SUBJECT AGREEMENT IN GENDER

The study also analyzes several verbs in order to explore the occurrence of inappropriate usage in Arabic grammar in terms of verb and subject agreement in gender. In the traditional Arabic grammar, there must be an agreement between the masculine subject with masculine verb and feminine subject with the feminine verb. The sentences below show the occurrence of contradiction in grammar usage in MSA:

a) ... على عدد كبير من المنحدرين حيث تم إحالة عشرات المحامين ... (...a large number of those involved were referred to dozens of lawyer...). The sentence shows that the word إحالة (refer), which is feminine, was used with the masculine verb تم (completed).

b) ... يتمثل في معرفة هل سيعود عناصر طالبان ... (... to know, do the elements of Taliban will return...) The sentence shows the word عناصر (elements), which is feminine, was used with the masculine verb يعود (return).

### VERB IN ONE SEMANTIC FAMILY

The study also identifies variations in terms of verbs that have similar meanings or various verbs from one family of verbs that have similar meaning. The results in table 5 show several examples of this section.

TABLE 5. Verb Frequency by Semantic Family

No	Meaning	No	Verb	Frequency
1	Speaking	1	قال (said)	326
		2	يقول (say)	29
		3	تحدث (spoke)	6
		4	يتحدث (speak)	5
		5	يتكلم (talk)	1
2	Killed	1	قتل (killed)	35
		2	استشهد (killed)	3
3	Watching	1	شهد (witnessed)	4
		2	يرى (see)	18
		3	رأى (saw)	7
		4	يشهد (witness)	4
		5	ينظر (look)	3
		6	نظر (looked)	1
4	Announcement	1	أعلن (announced)	85
		2	يعلن (announce)	5
		3	أخبر (informed)	2
5	Meeting	1	يلتقي (meet)	14
		2	يواجه (face)	10
		3	التقى (met)	5
		4	واجه (faced)	1
		5	يقابل (encounter)	1
6	Affirmation	1	أكد (confirmed)	111
		2	يؤكد (confirm)	14
		3	أثبت (affirmed)	2
		4	يثبت (affirm)	2
7	Return	1	يعود (return)	22
		2	عاد (returned)	5
		3	يرجع (back)	0



Table 5 shows that the Arabic newspapers may use different verbs in one semantic field to express the same meaning as shown in the ‘Meaning’ column. For example, the verb *يقول/قال* (*said*), *يتحدث/تحدث* (*speak*) and *يتكلم* (*talk*) share similar meaning to indicate someone ‘speaking’. For the verb that shows the meaning of ‘killed’, the verb *قتل* (*killed*) was used more frequently with 35 frequencies than the verb *استشهد* (*killed*) with only 3 frequencies. The same phenomenon is also found in the verb that means ‘watching’ where the verb *يرى* (*see*) was used more at 18 frequencies than the verb *رأى* (*saw*), *شهد* (*witnessed*), *يشهد* (*witness*), *ينظر* (*look*) and *نظر* (*looked*), each at 7, 4, 4, 3 and 1 usage respectively. For other meanings, the verb *أعلن* (*announced*), *يلتقي* (*meet*), *أكد* (*confirmed*) and *يعود* (*return*) was used each at 85, 14, 111 and 22 frequencies which are more frequently than other verbs in its family meaning.

#### VERB WITH TRANSITIVITY

The study also looked at language usage variation with regard to verb transitivity to particles (prepositions). This is because in Arabic language it is a well known grammar practice to use certain verbs that incorporate specific particles. The analysis in this part proves that some verbs are used with different particles to indicate similar meaning in order to generate variants in terms of word choice.

TABLE 6. Use of Verbs with Particles

Verb	No	Particle	Frequency	Total
أصيب ( <i>hit by</i> )	1	-	17	28
	2	بـ ( <i>with</i> )	11	
وصل ( <i>arrived</i> )	1	إلى ( <i>to</i> )	8	14
	2	-	6	
تسعى ( <i>strive</i> )	1	إلى ( <i>to</i> )	7	14
	2	لـ ( <i>for</i> )	7	
تهدف ( <i>aim</i> )	1	إلى ( <i>to</i> )	5	7
	2	لـ ( <i>for</i> )	2	
تعلق ( <i>related</i> )	1	بـ ( <i>with</i> )	11	12
	2	-	1	
دعى ( <i>called</i> )	1	إلى ( <i>to</i> )	22	24
	2	لـ ( <i>for</i> )	2	

Table 6 shows that several verbs were with different particles other than the regularly used particle. For example, the verb *أصيب* (*hit by*) was used both without the particle *بـ* (*with*) each at 17 and 11 frequencies. The table shows that the verb *وصل* (*arrived*) with the particle *إلى* (*to*) and without was used at 8 and 6 frequencies. The verb *تسعى* (*strive*) was used with particle *إلى* (*to*) and *لـ* (*for*) at 7 occurrences for each. The verb *تهدف* (*aim*) was used with the particle *إلى* (*to*) to indicate ‘aim or objective’. However, the findings proved that the variation which occurred in this particular verb is by using it with other particle *لـ* (*for*) to replace *إلى* (*to*). The same occurred with other verbs; as the verb *تعلق* (*related*), which is normally paired with *بـ* (*with*) and *دعى* (*called*) with *إلى* (*to*).

#### WORD VARIATION BETWEEN NEWSPAPERS

##### WORD VARIATION BY PHRASE

The analysis then makes an extensive investigation on phrase variation. The analysis for this section proves that different newspaper used different phrases to indicate similar thing.

TABLE 7. Differences in Use of Phrases in Arabic Newspapers

Phrase	Newspaper	Freq	Phrase	Newspaper	Freq
الشرق الأوسط العربي (Arab Middle East)	Al-Khabar	1	الشرق الأوسط الجديد (New Middle East)	Al-Furat	1
دولة إسرائيل (state of Israel)	Al-Safir	1	دولة يهودية (Jewish state)	Al-Safir	2
	Al-Quds al-Arabi	1			

Table 7 shows two examples of the different usage of phrases used in Arabic newspapers. The phrases الشرق الأوسط العربي (Arab Middle East) and الشرق الأوسط الجديد (New Middle East) are used in different newspapers (Al-Khabar and Al-Furat respectively) and the second phrases دولة إسرائيل (state of Israel) and دولة يهودية (Jewish state) are used with similar frequencies, but the usage of both is most notable in Al-Safir newspaper.

#### VERB VARIATION BY TRANSITIVITY

In terms of verb transitivity to particles, the results show that the word usage variation can also be seen when comparison was made between newspapers. The results show that there were several differences between the newspapers in terms of verbs transitivity to particles.

TABLE 8. Dispersion of Verbs by Transitivity Across Newspapers

Verb	Particle	Newspaper							Total
		Al-Ahram	Al-Furat	Al-Jazirah	Al-Khabar	Al-Quds al-Arabi	Al-Sabah al-Jadid	Al-Safir	
أصيب (hit by)	-	6	6	6	-	2	2	6	28
	→ (with)	6	4	2	-	2	-	3	17
وصل (arrived)	إلى (to)	-	2	4	-	-	2	3	11
	-	-	3	-	3	2	3	3	14
تسعى (strive)	إلى (to)	-	2	-	2	1	2	1	8
	لـ (for)	-	1	-	1	1	1	2	6
تسعى (strive)	إلى (to)	3	2	1	4	1	2	1	14
	لـ (for)	-	1	1	2	1	1	1	7
تهدف (aim)	إلى (to)	3	1	-	2	-	1	-	7
	لـ (for)	1	-	1	1	1	1	2	7
يتعلق (relate)	إلى (to)	1	-	1	1	1	1	-	5
	لـ (for)	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
يتعلق (relate)	→ (with)	2	1	1	3	2	1	2	12
	-	2	1	1	3	2	-	2	11
دعى (called)	إلى (to)	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
	لـ (for)	5	1	1	4	3	5	5	24
	إلى (to)	4	1	1	3	3	5	5	22
	لـ (for)	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	2

Table 8 shows that variations in verbs transitivity can be traced according to newspapers. This is applied by either using the normal particle or a totally different one. There are also instances where both normal and different particle are used at the same time. The example for the first situation is the verb تهدف (aim) and لـ (for), where both verbs are only used by Al-Safir newspaper at two frequencies, while other newspapers use the particle إلى (to). The second situation can be noted in the verb دعى (called) where Al-Ahram and Al-Khabar newspapers use both particle إلى (to) and لـ (for), while other newspapers use only the particle إلى (to). The results also show that several particles were used at almost similar level which creates variations. For instance, the verb تسعى (strive) both were used with particle لـ (for) and إلى (to) at seven times each. In contrast, the verb يتعلق (related) and دعى (called) are clearly dominated by only one particle → (with) for يتعلق (related) at 11 frequencies in all newspapers

except the *Al-Sabah al-Jadid* newspaper and إلى (to) for دعى (called) at 22 frequencies in all newspapers.

#### WORD VARIATION BY LOAN WORD

The findings showed several interesting points when loan words were analyzed. The results show that all the selected newspapers have been affected by western languages especially by English.

TABLE 9. Example of Specific Loan Words in World Affairs Section

No	Word	Freq	Newspaper	Origin word	Arabic
1	مارينز	2	<i>Al-Furat</i>	Marines	البحري
2	إنترناشونال	1	<i>Al-Safir</i>	International	الدولي
3	الترانسفير	1	<i>Al-Quds al-Arabi</i>	Transfer	انتقال
4	جاكت	1	<i>Al-Ahram</i>	Jacket	سترة
5	تي-شيرت	1	<i>Al-Ahram</i>	T-shirt	ثوب

Table 9 shows examples of loan words that create variations according to newspapers. It proves that some newspapers still prefer to use the foreign words even though the Arabic words are available. In the each of the example that follows, the first words are the English words that have been spelt in Arabic and the second words are the original Arabic words. The word تي-شيرت (*T-shirt*) for instance, can use the Arabic ثوب (*cloth*) but the newspapers prefer to use the foreign word تي-شيرت (*T-shirt*). The same situation occurs with regard to the usage of جاكيت (*jacket*) instead of سترة (*coat*). The results also show that *Al-Safir* newspaper uses the word إنترناشونال (*international*) instead of دولي (*international*) and *Al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper uses the foreign word ترانسفير (*transfer*) instead of انتقال (*transfer*). The first Arabic words for *international* and *transfer* are English words spelt in Arabic spelling while the latter words are original Arabic words.

#### WORD VARIATION BY SPELLING

With regard to variation in word spelling, the results show that the wide use of loan words in Arabic newspapers contributed to the variation of spelling as illustrated in table 10.

TABLE 10. Example of Loan Words with Variant Spellings

No	Word	Newspaper	Freq	Word	Newspaper	Freq		
1	سيناريوات (scenarios)	Al-Sabah al-Jadid	1	سيناريوهات	Al-Khabar	5		
2	إستراتيجية (strategy)	Total	1	ستراتيجية	Al-Furat	5		
		Al-Furat	7			1		
		Al-Safir	5					
		Al-Sabah al-Jadid	5					
		Al-Khabar	1					
3	أطلسي (Atlantic)	Al-Ahram	1	أطلسي	Al-Ahram	2		
		Total	19				Total	1
		Al-Sabah al-Jadid	14					
		Al-Jazirah	5					
		Total	19				Total	2

Table 10 shows the spelling variations for three words. For the word سيناريوات (*scenarios*) the newspaper from Iraq (*Al-Sabah al-Jadid*) spells it without the consonant هـ (*ha*). In contrast, the newspaper from Algeria (*Al-Khabar*) spells سيناريوهات with the consonant هـ (*ha*). For the word إستراتيجية (*strategy*), five newspapers namely; *Al-Furat*, *Al-Safir*, *Al-Sabah al-Jadid*, *Al-*

*Khabar* and *Al-Ahram* newspapers spell it with an added consonant ء (*hamzat*). However, the word استراتيجية (*strategy*) without the consonant ء (*hamzat*) was used only in *Al-Furat*. For the word أطلسي (*Atlantic*), it was spelt in *Al-Sabah al-Jadid* and *Al-Jazirah* newspaper with the consonant س (*sin*) while in *Al-Ahram* newspaper, the word اطلنطي (*Atlantic*) is spelt with the consonant ن (*nun*) and ط (*tho*).

## DISCUSSIONS

### WORD USAGE VARIATION FOR THE WHOLE DATA

#### NOUN

Analysis on sound and broken plural showed that broken plurals occurred more frequently than sound plurals. When both forms are available, the newspapers preferred to use broken plurals rather than sound plurals. For example, the broken plural تقارير (*reports*) was used more than the sound plural تقارير (*reports*) even though the usage of both forms is accepted in Arabic language. That might be due to the fact that the sound plural is normally used for the plural referring to human beings such as مسلمات (*feminine Muslims*), مدرسات (*feminine teachers*) and others. In order to differentiate between human and non-human beings, the sound plural is used more for human and broken plural for the latter.

With regard to phrases, the analysis in table 4 showed that newspapers create variations by proposing new expressions in addition to the normal practicing phrases. The new expressions were not created in vain, but as a reflection of the need of the current situation (Adham, n.d). For example, the use of the phrase الشرق الأوسط الجديد (*New Middle East*) and الشرق الأوسط العربي (*Arab Middle East*) in addition to الشرق الأوسط (*Middle East*) proved that Arabic newspapers use other terms to refer to the Arab countries. This phenomenon can be related to the existence of the state of Israel among the Arab countries, leading to the formation of a new term to take into account their new unwelcomed neighbor. Apart from that, the usage of certain phrases as short forms after repeatedly in the same article is significant to create variation, for example, the phrase الجامعة العربية (*Arab League*) is a short form of الجامعة الدول العربية (*League of Arab States*) and الحلف الأطلسي (*Atlantic Treaty*) is a short form of حلف شمال الأطلسي (*North Atlantic Treaty Organization*). In both cases, the first examples, the short form of the phrases are used after repeated usage used in the same article. The first time usage of the phrases in the article was in full form. With regard to the word المحتلة (*occupied*), the analysis shows it was used together with القدس (*Jerusalem*) and الأرض (*land*) to refer to the occupation of Palestine. Although this is an indication of the protest of the Arab world against Israel settlements, the existence of positive phrases about Israel shows that the rejection was not absolute. The use of phrases such as دولة إسرائيل (*State of Israel*) and حكومة إسرائيل (*Israeli Government*) in Arabic newspapers shows the indirect recognition of the state of Israel among Arab countries as a legitimate country despite protests of the Israel existence in the Arab world.

#### VERBS

The analysis also showed that the masculine verb might be used with a feminine subject which is considered as inappropriate usage in Arabic grammar. The examples showed that the feminine singular noun إحالة (*refer*), was used with the masculine singular verb تم (*completed*) for the sentence على عدد كبير من المنحرفين حيث تم إحالة عشرات المحامين (*a large number of those involved were referred to dozens of lawyer*) and the feminine plural noun عناصر (*elements*) was used with the masculine singular verb يعود (*return*) in the sentence يتمثل في معرفة هل سيعود عناصر طالبان (*to know, do the elements of Taliban will return*). According to Arabic grammar,

the masculine noun can only be incorporated with the masculine verb, and the feminine noun with the feminine verb (Mace, 1998). This phenomenon can be considered as a new variation in Arabic style which has been promoted by the Arabic media deliberately, thus ignoring some grammatical aspects. This had been stressed by Parkinson (2008) that the grammatical aspects is one of the reasons that contributes to language variation. This happens when one particular newspaper ignores the grammar rules but not in other newspapers.

The analysis of verbs that have similar meanings or the usage of various verbs from one family of verbs that have similar meaning showed that the Arabic newspapers may use different verbs in one semantic field to express the same meaning. For example, the verb *يقول/قال* (*said*), *يتحدث/تحدث* (*speak*) and *يتكلم* (*talk*) shared similar meaning to indicate someone 'speaking'. The table also highlighted many significant instances of some verbs are more commonly used than others with similar meanings, due to the varying requirements of different situations. The fact that meaning differences still exist, depending on context between verbs in one semantic family also contribute in creating language use variations. It could be stated that different contexts require the usage of different word from within the same semantic family. This is in line with Sharaf (n.d) statement who noted 'no word has two meanings in one time and one situation'. For example, the findings showed that the word *قُتل* (*killed*) was used more frequently than the verb *استشهد* (*killed*). Although both words indicate similar meaning they are applied on different contexts. In explaining this fact, the verb *استشهد* (*killed*) was used in the context of the death of a person for their faith, while this specific sense is not carried in the word *قُتل* (*killed*). Detailed analysis showed that the verb *استشهد* (*killed*) was referred to three times to the Palestinian opposition or *Hamas* members in the *World Affairs* corpus, while the verb *قُتل* (*killed*) was used to indicate death in other countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Philippines and even Israel. This shows that Arabic newspapers considered Palestinians' deaths as martyrdoms or heroic.

Analysis on verb with transitivity proved that several verbs may be used with different particles other than the regularly used particle to indicate similar meaning. For example, the verb *تسعى* (*strive*) was used with the particle *إلى* (*to*) and *لـ* (*for*). As the usage of this verb with particle *إلى* (*to*) is a normal usage, the existence of particle *لـ* (*for*) can be related to the effects of other languages, especially English, because English uses 'strive for' to mean 'exert strenuous effort to achieve something', which may be translated as *تسعى لـ* (*strive for*) in Arabic. This point resonates with the previous discussion about the possibilities of Arabic language being affected by foreign language (Mol, 2003).

#### WORD VARIATION IN DIFFERENT NEWSPAPERS

Analysis on word frequency by phrase according to newspapers proved that different newspapers used different phrases to indicate similar thing. The findings showed two examples of the different usage of phrases in Arabic newspapers. The existence of both phrases *الشرق الأوسط العربي* (*Arab Middle East*) and *الشرق الأوسط الجديد* (*New Middle East*) showed that the Arabic newspapers use other terms to refer to Arab countries, rather than the normally used term *الشرق الأوسط* (*Middle East*) which can be found in *Al-Furat* and *Al-Khabar* newspapers. This is related to the existence of the Israel state in the Arab world and the term was introduced in June 2006 in Tel Aviv by the U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice to confirm an American Israel military roadmap and redraw the map of the Middle East (Nazemroaya, 2006). Meanwhile in the second example, *دولة إسرائيل* (*State of Israel*) and *دولة يهودية* (*Jewish State*) are used by *Al-Safir* (Lebanon) and *Al-Quds al-Arabi* (United Kingdom) indicating their indirect recognition of Israel. Lebanon is a country that borders Israel and is in continuous conflict with Israel.

The analysis in terms of word variation by transitivity showed the existence of several differences between newspapers in this respect. The results show that the variation occurred when the newspapers either practise a totally different particle than the one normally used or applying both. The example for the first situation is the verb *يهدف* (*aim*) and *لـ* (*for*) where it is only used by *Al-Safir* newspaper, while the other newspapers use particle *إلى* (*to*). The second situation is noted in the verb *دعى* (*called*) where the *Al-Ahram* and *Al-Khabar* use both particles *إلى* (*to*) and *لـ* (*for*), while other newspapers use only the particle *إلى* (*to*). One of the reasons for this variations can be related to the effect of foreign language on Arabic especially English. In explaining this fact, English language use two styles to link to the objective (Abdelali, 2004), for example, 'purpose to' which can be paired with *يهدف إلى* (*aim to*) and 'aim for' which is similar to *يهدف لـ* (*aim for*).

The analysis in terms of loan word proved that all the selected newspapers have been affected by Western languages especially by English as a world language, but at varying degree. It proves that in some cases, the Arabic newspapers are strongly affected by foreign language (Abdelali, 2004) to the extent that it is more preferable than to the original Arabic words. It should be mentioned that *Al-Furat* and *Al-Quds al-Arabi* newspapers are published in non-Arab countries so the relatively strong impact of loan words is not surprising. However, similar situation also occurs in some newspapers in Arab countries showed that they are also widely receptive to loan words. The possible reason for this situation is related to the semantic aspect of the particular word. The word *تي-شيرت* (*T-shirt*) for instance, is not accurately translated by the word *ثوب* (*cloth*) because the Arabic word can indicate to any shirt, while the word *T-shirt* is specific to a particular type of shirt. The use of the word *جاكت* (*jacket*) rather than *سترة* (*coat*) is probably because the news writer considered that the word *سترة* (*coat*) did not accurately translate 'jacket' because it is a translation based on the Arabic root meaning and gives the sense of 'a thing that covers'. This is certainly not a precise translation of 'jacket'. However, the findings show no reasonable reason for using the foreign word *ترانسفير* (*transfer*) instead of Arabic word *انتقال* (*transfer*) as the foreign word can be accurately translated by the original Arabic word. The fact that the word *ترانسفير* (*transfer*) was found in *Al-Quds al-Arabi* (United Kingdom) is an indication that this newspaper is more exposed to foreign language influence.

In terms of spelling, the results show that the wide use of loan words in Arabic newspapers contributed to the variation of spelling. This may occur because, in most cases, loan words do not comply with the conventions of Arabic word formation and yet caused differences between countries in transcribing the pronunciation of the particular loan word. Ola Hafez (1996) has a significant remark on this issue by saying that 'in the process of integration, loanwords may retain more than one phonological and morphological pattern that varies freely'. For example, the spelling variation in the plural noun *سيناريوهات* (*scenarios*) and *سيناريوات* (*scenarios*) occurs because the sound 'io' is unavailable in Arabic. This causes conflict when the plural form is needed to be built. The newspaper from Iraq (*Al-Sabah al-Jadid*) sees building its plural by simply by adding plural indicators (*alif* and *ta*). In contrast, the newspaper from Algeria (*Al-Khabar*) denied it by putting the consonant (*ha*) before *alif* and *ta*. For the second word, the confusion occurred in loan word that begins with the sound 'stra' which is not available in Arabic language. Therefore, most newspapers added the consonant (*hamzat*) to enable pronunciation as *إستراتيجية* (*strategy*), and the newspaper from Australia (*Al-Furat*) inserted a short vowel to make *ستراتيجية* (*strategy*). The last word is not similar to the previous two words, because the spelling variation occurs due to how the word is borrowed. The spelling *أطلنطي* (*Atlantic*) is a direct transfer from English (*Atlantic*) while the spelling of the word *أطلسي* (*Atlantic*) comes from the word *أطلس* (*atlas*).

## CONCLUSION

The result of the analysis inspired several conclusions and new findings. Investigation into noun showed that newspapers prefer to use broken rather than sound plurals when both forms are available in Arabic. Meanwhile, analysis in terms of phrases revealed that the use of nouns in combination with others as phrases to indicate similar meaning can be related to several factors. Firstly, the current situation of the particular issue (Adham, n.d), e.g the use of new phrase الشرق الأوسط الجديد (*New Middle East*) and secondly, the use of phrases as short forms after repeating in the same article and lastly, specific indication of the word, e.g the use of القدس (*Jerusalem*) by incorporating المحتلة (*occupied*) shows that Arabs are uncomfortable with the illegal Israel settlements on Palestinian land which is a sacred place in the Muslim world.

In terms of verb and subject agreement in gender, the results showed that the variation occurred due to the inappropriate language use of Arabic grammar. This is in line with research finding by Parkinson (2008) that stated that differences occur between newspapers from different country in terms of subject agreement. With regard to ‘verbs with the same semantic meaning’, the results showed that verb accuracy is very important in news writing, both for precision and for attracting readers’ attention. This was indicated by the fact that some verbs within one semantic family were used more frequently than others. In relation to this, Abdul Aziz (n.d.) mentioned that the use of suitable and accurate words actively affects readers understanding.

The study also showed that the verbs used with particle might take different particles while conveying the same indication. The analysis showed that this was caused by several factors, such as the region where the newspapers were published (Ditters, 1991), and the influence of other languages, especially English. In line with this fact, Van Mol (2003) stated that the variations in the Arabic language usage may occur due to Arab countries colonization experiences especially from Britain, France and Italy. According to him, these colonial countries may have influenced the Arab countries language use.

With respect to loan words, the study revealed that variations can be traced clearly between newspapers published in Arab countries and non-Arab countries, with the latter being more open to accepting the loan words, even though there are already an equivalent terms in Arabic. In terms of spelling, the study revealed that several loan words contributed to variations. This is because, several loan words are spelt in Arabic based on the spelling in the language they were derived from (Abdelali, 2004). Some of them are not restricted to the Arabic spelling system. This is due to the fact that several sound clusters in words in their original language are not available in Arabic, so no specific rules are applied in spelling those foreign morphemes in Arabic letters. As a result, different countries will create their own rule of spelling as mentioned in the discussion part.

Finally, this study has revealed to the readers several important points about language usage in Arabic media particularly the newspapers. These points showed that Arabic language has changed and transformed. These changes might occur accordingly to the different countries that colonized them especially from the European Countries. As a result, different Arab countries are influenced by different European countries that lead to language variations (Abdelali, 2004). It causes a massive global implication to Arabic newspapers. It is important for these people to have a deeper awareness of the variations discussed in this paper to ensure precise understanding of the Arabic language usage.

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